GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:249
ANSWERED ON:20.03.2002
BIOLOGICAL WARFARE
PRABODH PANDA;RAM PRASAD SINGH

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the hazards of biological warfare; and

(b) if so, the steps the Government have taken to meet the threat of anthrax and other biological agents which may be used by the enemies of the country?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR)

(a)&(b) A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 249 FOR 20.3.2002

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has taken following actions in the context of the present international scenario:

1. A detailed list of biological agents used as weapons prepared by the Indian Council of Medical Research along with signs and symptoms, likely method of dissemination, incubation period, lethality and the availability of vaccines, anti-microbial therapy and treatment has been circulated to Health Secretary and Director of Health Services of all States/UTs., and Central Government hospitals advising them to take following precautionary steps

- Earmarking of maximum number of beds for emergency contingency.
- Stocking of vaccines/ sera / drugs to the extent possible
- Setting up a special team of doctors for coordinated action. They should be sensitized on the impact of such weapons and treatment measures.

2. National Institute of Communicable Diseases, 22, Sham Nath Marg, Delhi-110054, an Institute under Directorate General of Health Services, has been designated as the nodal agency for carrying out the tests of suspected Anthrax samples. Facilities for testing Anthrax Bacillus are also available in National Institute of Cholera & Enteric Diseases, Kolkata, Department of Microbiology, AIIMS National Institute of Virology, Pune, Enterovirus Research Centre, Mumbai, Vector Control Research Centre, Pondicherry, Centre for Research in Medical Entomology, Madurai, Institute of Pathology, Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad and Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izat Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

3. Do`s & Don`ts have already been published in the leading National Dailies regarding Anthrax.

4. Two expert group meetings were held (1st & 17th October) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, to review the management (diagnosis, treatment, IEC activities etc.) of recently emerging diseases of public health importance like Dengue, Anthrax etc. Eminent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country, senior officials of Ministry of Health & F.W., and chiefs of different Government and private hospitals in Delhi, participated in the meeting and deliberated on various aspects of the bio-terrorism in the backdrop of current global situation.

5. Two expert group meetings (18th and 21st October, 2001) were held to finalise guidelines to be issued in CD Alert.

6. CD Alert, a monthly Newsletter of National Institute of Communicable Diseases titled `Bioterrorism-Public Health system to Remain Alert` exclusively on Anthrax has been widely circulated. It has also been put in the Website of MOHFW (http://mohfw.nic.in) for information of general public.

7. A meeting-cum workshop on Biological & Chemical Terrorism was convened by the Department of Health on 29thOctober, 2001,

in New Delhi, wherein Health Secretary, Home Secretary and Director of Health Services from various States/UTs., eminent experts in the field of medical science from different organizations in the country and heads of different hospitals in Government and private sector in Delhi participated and deliberated on various aspects. The objectives of the meeting were to discuss the preparedness at all levels by way of sensitization of doctors, health personnel and general public. The representatives from the States informed the Central Government about the preparatory measures taken by them and assured availability of drugs in adequate quantity to tackle any situation.